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BIOGRAPHY.

Life of President Davies.

THE Rev. Mr. Samuel Davies, late president of the college of New-Jersey, was born on the 3d day of November, A. D. 1724. in the county of Newcastle, on Delaware. His father was a planter, who lived with great plainness and simplicity, and supported the character of an honest and pious man to his death. His mother who was greatly distinguished for her eminent piety, some time before the conception of this favorite only son, earnestly desired such a blessing; and as she then had only born a daughter, who was nearly five years old, she had special occasion for the exercise of her faith, in waiting for the divine answer to her petition. In this situation she took example from the mother of the prophet Samuel, and "Vowed a vow unto the Lord; that if he would indeed give her a man-child, shewhould devote him to his service all the days of his life." I Sam. i. 11.

IT may well be supposed, that the parents received this child as from God, and that the mother especially, who had reason to look upon him as a token of the divine favor, and an express answer to her Prayers, would, with the greatest tenderness, begin the rearing of this beloved plant. As there was no school in the neighborhood, she herself taught him to read: and, although he was then very young, he is said to have made such proficiency as surprised every person who heard of it.

HE continued at home with his parents till he was about ten years old, during which time he appeared to have no remarkable impressions of a religious kind; but behaving himself as is common for a sprightly towardly child, under the influence of pious example and instruction. He was then sent to an English school, at some distance from his father's, where he continued two years, and made great progress in his learning; but for want of the pious instruction with which he was favored at home, he grew somewhat more careless of the things of religion.

IT appears, that about this time of life, careless as he was, he made a practice of secret prayer, especially in the evening. The reason, (as he tells it in his diary) why he was so punctual in the evening was, that "he feared lest he should perhaps die before morning." What is farther observable in his prayers at this time is, that "he was more ardent in his supplications for being

introduced into the gospel-ministry, than for any other thing."

Mr. Davies speaks, in a letter to the Rev. J. Bellamy on the state of religion in Virginia, of a glorious display of divine grace in and about Somerset county in Maryland, of its beginning, as he thinks, in the year 1745, by the ministry of Mr. Robinson, and of its being carried on by sundry ministers that preached transiently there. "I was there (says he) about two months, when the work was at its height, and I never saw such a deep and spreading concern among people in my life as then appeared among them. The assemblies were numerous, though it was in the extremity of a cold winter; and frequently there were very few among them that did not give some plain indications of distress or joy. O! these were the happiest days that ever my eyes saw, or are, I fear, like to see." If Mr. Davies was there (and I suppose he was there as a minister) in the year 1745, he was but twenty-one years of age. However, he was sent by the presbytery of Newcastle to Virginia, in the year 1747, when he was but twenty-three years of age. Here he continued till the year 1748, when he was chosen by the synod of New-York, at the instance of the trustees of New-Jersey college, as a fit person to accompany the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Tennent to Great-Britain and Ireland, with a view of soliciting benefactions for the said college. In this mission he was highly successful; for to his services, added to the pious and liberal charity of the friends of religion and learning in Great-Britain, received upon that occasion, does the college of New-Jersey, in a great degree, owe its present flourishing condition.

On his return home, he again entered on his laborious and beloved task of preaching the gospel to his several congregations; and continued in this work until the year 1759, when he was elected president of the college of New-Jersey, in the room of the Rev. Mr. Jonathan Edwards. The college, before he came, had been in an unhappy situation; partly owing to the length of that melancholy period between the death of president Burr and his accession, and partly to the evil dispositions and practices of a few members of the society. President Burr died in september, 1757: and although Mr. Edwards was elected a few days after, he did not take upon himself the government of the college till February, 1758; and about a fortnight after, took the small-pox, of which he died in March following. Mr. Davies was not initiated in his office till the latter end of July, 1759; so that the college lay under the obvious disadvantages of a bereaved condition for almsst two years. But the prudent measures taken by president Davies soon surmounted these disadvantages; so that in a few months a spirit of emulation in learning and morality, as had been usual, evidently characterized the students of Nassau-Hall.

While he continued president his labors were great; and his application to study was necessarily more intense than that of his predecessors. For he came to his seat of the Muses when its learning, by the eminent abilities of president Burr, was advanced to a very considerable degree; and he had just emerged from a sea of ministerial labor in various places, wherein a common genius would have been able to have made but little improvement in academical learning. Besides, the speedy passage he made through the course of his studies, previous to his entering into the ministry, made his after application the more

necessary for so important and elevated a situation. He was determined not to degrade his office, but to be in reality what his station supposed him; and accordingly exerted himself to the utmost. The labors of the day seemed to him rather an incentive to study than rest in the night; for he commonly sat up till twelve o'clock, and often later, although he rose by break of day. The success was proportionable; for, by the mighty efforts of his great genius, and by dint of industry, he left the college of New-Jersey at his death in as high a state of literary merit as it ever had been in since its first institution.

THERE is reason to believe, that the intense application with which Mr. Davies attended to the duties of his office was one great cause of his death. The habit of his body was plethoric; and it is not to be doubted but that his health for some years had very much depended upon the exercise of riding, to which he was necessarily obliged while he lived in Virginia, though even then he had several severe fevers, supposed to arise principally from his applicacation to study in the intervals of riding abroad. When he came to the college he scarcely used any bodily exercise, save what was required in going from his own house to Nassau-Hall, which is a space about ten roods, five or six times a day.

IN the latter end of January, A. D. 1761, a bad cold seized him, and for his relief he was bled. The same day he transcribed for the press the sermon, which was soon after published, on the death of the late king, and the day after preached twice in the college-hall; by all which, the arm in which he was bled became much inflamed, and increased his former indisposition. On the Monday morning after, at breakfast, he was seized with a violent chilly fit, which was succeeded by an inflamatory fever, and, in ten days (4th February) brought on the period of his important life.

ALTHOUGH premonitions of death in the present state of the world are seldom, if ever, given to mankind; and they who are disposed to interpret ordinary occurrences into such premonitions, when, by something similar in the event, those occurrences would seem as if predictive, generally discover their weakness; yet the circumstances of the death of an eminent person are commonly very acceptable to the public; and for this reason it may not be amiss to mention an anecdote which Mr. Davies more than once took notice of in his last sickness.

AN intimate friend of his, a few days before the beginning of the year in which he died, in conversation, told him that a sermon would be expected from him on the new-year's day; and, among other things, happened to mention that the late president Burr, on the first day of the year wherein he died, preached a sermon on Jer. xxviii. 16. *Thus saith the Lord, this year thou shalt die!* and after his death, the people took occasion to say it was premonitory; upon which Mr. D. observed, that "although it ought not to be viewed in that light, yet it was very remarkable." When new-year's day came, he preached; and the congregation were not a little surprised at his taking the same text of scripture. Upon his being taken with his last sickness, about three weeks after, he soon adverted to this circumstance, and mentioned it as remarkable that he had been undesignedly led to preach, as it were, his own funeral sermon.

It is much to be lamented that the violence of the disorder, of which this excellent man died, deprived him of the regular exercise of his reason the greater part of the time of his sickness, otherwise the public would undoubtedly have been gratified with his remarks on the views of an approaching eternity; and would have received another evidence of the superior excellency and power of that religion, which alone can support the soul, and make the (otherwise gloomy) prospect of death cheerful. For the issues of this decisive period, his life had been eminently calculated from his youth. It abundantly appears, that from twelve or fourteen years of age, he had continually maintained the strictest watch over his thoughts and actions, and daily lived under a deep sense of his own unworthiness, of the transcendant excellency of the Christian religion, of the great importance of a public spirit, and the necessity of exerting it in promoting the general good. Even in his *delirium* his mind discovered the favorite objects of its concern, the prosperity of Christ's church, and the good of mankind: his bewildered brain was continually imagining, and his faltering tongue expressing, some expedient for these important purposes.

In addition to the foregoing, we subjoin the character of president Davies, as drawn by his friend the Rev. David Bostwick. Perhaps the ardor of friendship animated the writer to give rather a high coloring to some parts of the portrait; yet those who were best acquainted with Mr. Davies, will bear testimony to the general truth and accuracy of this delineation.]

"Mr. Davies was a man of such uncommon furniture, both of gifts and grace, and adorned with such an assemblage of amiable and useful qualities, and each shining with such distinguished lustre that it is truly hard to say in which he most excelled, and equally hard to mention one valuable or useful accomplishment in which he did not excel. A large and capacious understanding; a solid, unbiassed, and well regulated judgment; a quick apprehension; a genius truly penetrating; a fruitful invention; an elegant taste; were all happily united in him, and constituted a real greatness of mind, which never failed to strike every observer with an agreeable surprise.

"To this extraordinary natural capacity were added the improvements of a learned and polite education, which though in the early years of his study it was embarrassed with many peculiar disadvantages, yet by the strength of his genius, and dint of indefatigable application, was cultivated to such a degree of elegance and refinement, that it attracted the notice and admiration of all the friends of science wherever he was known.

"And as the powers of his mind were enriched with every valuable human accompiishment, so they were eminently improved by the influence and efficacy of sanctifying grace; in consequence of which they were all sincerely devoted to the service of God, and the good of mankind. In the early stages of his life, it pleased a soverrign God to call him effectually from his natural alienation, to the knowledge and love of himself, to take a powerful possession of his heart, and seize all the faculties of his active and capacious soul for his service. Upon finishing therefore the course of his preparatory studies, he entered into the sacred employment of the gospel-ministry, and solemnly dedi-

ued himself, with all his superior talents, to the work of the sanctuary.

"In the exercise of this sacred office, his fervent zeal and undissembled piety, popular talents and engaging methods of address, soon acquired him a distinguished character, and general admiration. Scarce was he known as a public preacher but he was sent, on the earnest application of the people, to some of the distant settlements of Virginia, where many of the inhabitants, in respect of religion, were but a small remove from the darkness and ignorance of uncultivated heathenism, and where the religion of Jesus, which he endeavored to propagate, had to encounter with all the blindness, prejudice, and enmity, that are natural to the heart of the most depraved sinner. Yet under all apparent disadvantages, his labors were attended with such remarkable success, that all opposition quitted the unequal combat, and gave way to the powerful energy of the divine Spirit, which was graciously pleased by his ministry to add many new subjects to the spiritual kingdom of our glorious Immanuel.

"The work of the ministry was Mr. Davies' great delight; and for it he was admirably furnished with every valuable qualification of nature and grace. Divinity was a favorite study, in which he made a proficiency uncommon for his years, and yet he generally preferred the most necessary and practical branches of it, to the dark mazes of endless controversy and intricate disputes; aiming chiefly at the conversion of sinners, and to change the hearts and lives of men by an affecting representation of the plain, but most important, interesting truths of the law and the gospel. His talents at composition, especially for the pulpit, was equalled by few, and perhaps exceeded by none. His taste was judicious, elegant, and polite, and yet his discources were plain and pungent, peculiarly adapted to pierce the conscience and affect the heart. His diction was surpassingly beautiful and comprehensive, tending to make the most stupid hearer sensibly feel, as well as clearly understand. Sublimity and elegance, plainness and perspicuity, and all the force and energy that the language of mortals could convey, were the ingredients of almost every composition. His manner of delivery, as to pronunciation, gesture, and modulation of voice, seemed to be a perfect model of the most moving and striking oratory.

"Whenever he ascended the sacred desk, he seemed to have not only the attention, but all the various passions of his auditory entirely at his command. And as his personal appearance was august and venerable, yet benevolent and mild, so he could speak with the most commanding authority, or melting tenderness according to the variation of his subject. With what majesty and grandeur, with what energy and striking solemnity, with what powerful and almost irresistible eloquence would he illustrate the truths, and inculcate the duties of Christianity! Mount Sinai seemed to thunder from his lips, when he denounced the tremendous curses of the law, and sounded the dreadful alarm to guilty, secure, impenitent sinners. The solemn scenes of the last judgment seemed to rise in view, when he arraigned, tried, and convicted self-deceivers, and formal hypocrites. And how did the balm of Gilead distil from his lips, when he exhibited a bleeding, dying Saviour to sinful mortals, as a

sovereign remedy for the wounded heart, and anguished conscience! In a word, whatever subject he undertook, persuasive eloquence dwelt upon his tongue; and his audiance was all attention. He spoke as on the borders of eternity, and as viewing the glories and terrors of an unseen world, and conveyed the most grand affecting ideas of these important realities; realities which he then firmly believed, and which he now sees in the clearest light of intuitive demonstration.

"The usual lustre with which he shone could not long be confined to that remote corner of the world, but soon attracted the notice and pleasing admiration of men of genius, learning, or piety, far and near: and therefore, on a vacancy at the college of New-Jersey, occasioned by the decease of the two former presidents,* in a close and awful succession, he was elected to that important office in the year 1759.

"Distressing as it was both to him and his people, united in the strongest bonds of mutual affection, to think of a separation, yet a conviction of absolute duty, resulting from the importance of the station, from the various concurring providences, and lastly, from the unanimous advice of his reverend brethren convened in synod, determined him to accept the proposal. Great and pleasing were the expectations with which we beheld him enter into that exalted sphere of service; yet I may boldly say that they were vastly exceeded in every respect by the reputable manner in which he discharged the arduous trust. The progress he made in all the branches of science, with all his capacity and dilligence to acquire new improvements, enabled him to conduct the youth with great advantage through the several stages of useful and polite literature. And, while he endeavored to improve the minds, he was not less solicitous to reform the hearts and lives of his pupils, to make them good as well as great, and fit them for both worlds. He knew that religion was the brightest ornament of the human, and the fairest image of the divine nature, that all true benevolence to men must have its foundation laid in a supreme love to God, and that undissembled piety in the heart was the best security for usefulness in every character of life..

It was therefore his constant endeavor to promote the eternal as well as the temporal good of the youth entrushed to his tuition, not only by his fervent preaching and exemplary life, but by inculcating at the proper seasons the worth of their souls, and the vast, the inexpressible importance of their everlasting interests.

"In the government of the college, he had the peculiar art of mingling authority and lentiy in such a due proportion, as seldom or never failed of its desired success. Hence he was revered and loved by every member of that college family over which he presided.

"His performances at public aniversary commencements, as they never failed to do honor to the institution, so they always surprised his friends themselves by exceeding far exceeding, their most sanguine expectations.

"His poetical composition, and his elegant taste for cultivating th

* *The Rev. Mr. Aaron Burr, in 1757, and the Rev. Mr. Jonathan Edwards, who succeeded him, and died the winter following.*

Muses, gave additional embelishments to those performances, and greatly heightened the pleasure of his crowded auditors.

"His acquaintance with mankind, his easy and polite behaviour, his affability and condescention, his modesty and candor, his engaging manner of address, with his sprightly and entertaining conversation, all the genuine fruits of a most benevolent heart, rendered him greatly beloved through the large circle of his acquaintance, and as greatly admired even by strangers, whose occasional excursions gave them only the opportunity of a transient interview.

"His natural temper, amiable in itself, and sweeted with all the charms of divine grace, rendered him peculiarly dear in all the relative characters of social life, whether as an husband, a father, a tutor, or a friend."

Cynthia and Amelia—

A FRAGMENT.

SWEET was the time when I first felt the power of my Saviour's sanctifying grace, said Chyntia to Amelia, as they were engaged in friendly converse; and sweet to my soul have been his visits since. The world has now lost its charms; it ceases to captivate my affections; my soul feels joys of a kind superior to that which it can communicate. A source of pleasure I have found, whence streams of enjoyment flow, of which I may drink my fill.

DEAR Amelia, I once thought as you do, that no satisfaction surpassed that derived from the pleasures of life. No one had a higher relish for those pleasures.—No one pursued them with greater avidity, or, perhaps, enjoyed, in greater perfection, that happines which they can afford. But they satisfy not; they are fleeting; as the dew passes away before the effulgent beams of the sun; so do all these pleasures pass away before the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which shine upon my soul. But my eye, dear Amelia, oft drops the tear, when my mind reflects on the time misspent in their pursuit; my heart sometimes reproaches me; my guilt oft stares me in the face, because of my kind Redeemer. But I trust he has forgiven me; I trust his mercy has triumphed over my obstinacy and given me a title to eternal life. Oh! shall I tell how he met me? How great is his mercy! In the midst of gay circles,—fluttering in the ball room; in the midst of riches, cheerful prospects and delights, how often did my conscience reproach me! How often did he warn me! Then unhappy and miserable, I sighed for the lonely cot of the peasant, or the solitary place---a retreat from these gaeties. These things, thought I, will not bear the pure eyes of the Judge of all. If I should then plead my youth, my lively disposition, and the consequent temptations to which I am peculiarly exposed, they will not answer. Strict justice is his attribute. The soul that sinneth it shall die; but those that believe in Christ shall be saved. Can I then be saved thought I? I am a most grievious sinner—condemned by the law—

"*Thy wrath lies heavy on my soul,*
And waves of sorrow o'er me roll."

I said to God, if thou canst, be gracious still! I leave my vain course

my companions, my worldly hopes, peradventure said I, the Lord will be gracious ; I was cast out in the open field ; exposed to destruction, ready to perish ; but the Lord, and the Lord alone took me up. The time of his passing was a time of love. For his mercy's sake he saved me—he poured the balm of consolation into my wounds ; he bound them up—he mollified them with ointment. My heart rejoiced in his goodness ; and he enabled me to give him all the glory. With joy I attended to his ordinances, which before I esteemed fit only for the enthusiastic and superstitious —These, dear Amelia, of which perhaps you form the same idea that I did, are sweet to my soul, as a means of drawing near to God. Oh ! how much to be praised above those worldly schemes of pleasures which I once esteemed ! And now with complacency I look forward to death, judgment and eternity.— These things strike no dread to my mind, but often are the subjects of joy and rejoicing. For all this, to God is the glory to be given.— Fear not, Amelia, to believe and to trust the words of eternal life—I may say with the apostle : " What we have seen and heard that declare we unto you." I feel the power of truth—I know it is from God. Peace is upon you—happiness unspeakable and full of glory your reward, when you put away the evil of your doings ; when you repent of your sins in sincerity and truth ; when you leave *all* for Christ ; when you are *created in him* unto good works. Strength to do all this comes from him. Prayer is the means to obtain it. Pray, my Amelia, for the spirit of grace ; God is gracious : Jesus came to save sinners.

Dear Cynthia, said Amelia, with tears dropping from her eyes, I believe what you say. The peace of your mind beams in your countenance ; the joys of religion sparkle in your eyes. I see your cheerfulness, and often does my wicked heart envy your happiness. I am afflicted with your recital ; your example long has reproved me ; your words now take strong hold of my mind. Oh ! that the resolutions which now start in my breast, might always seem as important to my soul ; to change my course of life —to prepare for the solemnities of death—to make God my friend, Christ my Saviour from wrath to come.

O my friend, I am ready to cry what shall I do to be saved ? God be merciful to me a sinner.

Trust not, said Cynthia, to your own resolutions ; but believe and trust in God ; you can keep them only by his grace. My prayers will be for you. I must go. Adieu.

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